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ABSTRACT

The paper presents an analytical criticism of Isaac Kandel's methodology. Isaac Kandel, who compared the educational systems of England, France, Russia, Germany, Italy, and the United States in "Comparative Education," 1933, is credited with laying the foundations of the scientific study of comparative education. The paper criticizes three aspects of Kandel's methodology--his almost exclusively macrocosmic point of view, his nationalistic analysis of the relationship between society and education, and his lack of objectivity. Because Kandel overemphasized the macrocosmic point of view, he stressed the image of educational systems as expressions of the common culture of each nation. This preference for generalization presents a false image of nationally unified educational systems, fails to take dissenting minorities into account, and results in simplified statements about national character. Because historical analysis is an important tool for scholars of comparative education, it should be as useful as possible. Kandel's methodology would be more useful if it were more scientific. The conclusion is that Kandel's methodology will be improved by: (1) creating a balance between macro- and micro-historical analysis; (2) taking into account the possible need for a plurality of educational systems and policies; and (3) making comparative education research more scientific and neutral. (Author/DB)

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Isaac Kandel's Methodology of Comparative Education

by

Scott B. Birkinshaw

I

The subject of this paper is Isaac Kandel's method of doing comparative education. Kandel's importance in this area was assessed by Kazamias, who said:

> from the methodological standpoint it was not uutil the appearance of I. L. Kandel's monumental COMPARATIVE EDUCATION in 1933 that the foundations of a truly scientific study of comparative education were laid. Kandel's study charted a new course, and his views on the proper conduct of comparative studies have, in the main, remained the basis of the theoretical framework of all subsequent research in the discipline. (In Gezi, 1971, p.7)

Our analysis of Kandel's methodology will be centered around three of the eight catagories developed by Higson for the classification and analysis of methodologies of comparative education of nearly sixty noted scholars. These catagories are expressed in dichotomies which will make it convenient to compare and contrast Kandel's methods with other methods. In Higson's typology, Kandel's methods may be characterized as historical, dynamic, macrocosmic, educational-societal analysis, qualitative, and melioristic. The author is critical of three of these aspects of Kandel's methodology: his almost exclusively macrocosmic point of view, his rigidly nationalistic analysis of educational-societal relationships, and his

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unscientific lapses of meliorism. The author suggests that historical analysis is an important tool for scholars in comparative education (as are analyses based on the methodologies of economics, anthropology, and the social sciences) and that the usefulness of this tool may be increased by certain modifications of Kandel's historical method as applied to comparative education. Kandel himself would probably have rejected these suggestions because he saw himself as a defender of a tradition of "humanism" and of certain political ideals, rather than as an objective observer. (See Bereday, 1966) Our criticisms of his methods stem not from a disdain for Kandel's objectives, but rather from objectives which we share with many modern historians to make the theory and practice of history more scientific, though no less humanistic, and to understand other cultures and other educational systems "wie es eigentlich gewesen," as they really are, warts and all, as historians are fond of putting it. This should not be taken to mean that the author is in complete agreement with the positivist critiques of historical method. Indeed, our position is that the proper method of history lies somewhere between the positivists and Kandel.

II

The six relevant antinomies of Higson's typology are as follows:

Criteria	Dichotomous	Categories
Degree of analytic abstraction	microcosmic	macrocosmic
Main locus in time of relevant data	contemporaneous	historical
Whether social change is analyzed	static	dynamic

Whether educational processes per se analyzed	educational-societal analysis	intra-educational analysis
Nature of data compared	quantitative	qualitative
Author's main reason for undertaking analysis	neutral	melioristic

(Higson, 1968, p.338-339)

The central feature of Kandel's method is that it is historical. It is then, by its very nature, dynamic and qualitative in contrast to comparative methods of economic analysis, for instance, which may be contemporaneous, static, and quantitative. The equal validity and complementary aspects of analyses based on these contrasting methodological assumptions have led comparative educators to recognize that no single method of analysis is sufficient for the needs of comparative education. (Gezi, 1971, p.5-6) Our focus then will be on the remaining features of Kandel's methodology which have been enumerated above.

The controversy between advocates of macrocosmic analyses of history and microcosmic analyses of history has been lively for many years. This controversy, simply stated, is over whether generalities are more important or more meaningful than particulars, or vice-versa. It is a metaphysical argument between those who would synthesize human experience into ever greater degrees of generality and abstraction and those who cling to the empirical data of experience and cast doubts on the validity, verifiability, and meaningfulness of the generalizations and abstractions.

Kandel certainly preferred the macrocosmic point of view. His famous COMPARATIVE EDUCATION, published in 1933, deals with the educational systems of no

less than six nations, including England, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and the United States! It would be natural for a book with such a broad scope to be fairly general in its treatment of the subject, but Kandel makes it clear that he generalizes not because of space limitations, but because he is only interested in the most general phenomena, only interested in the educational phenomena which are national in scope and which relate to the national identity and character of the countries which are discussed. His aim is to find in education an expression of the common culture of the people of each country, including common language, common racial origin, common religion, as well as common political institutions. (Kandel, 1933, p.1-22) This enterprise may be possible in such homogenous nations as Sweden or Japan. But is it a fair method of describing such diverse national cultures as those which exist in the U.S.S.R. and the United States? It soon becomes clear that Kandel's view of the necessity for national systems of education is more than descriptive; it is a melioristic prescription. These then are the broad outlines of Kandel's method. Each part may be related to the others, as I have done, but each also has important implications of its own.

The macrocosmic tale of western culture is well known to educated persons. Our civilization is said to have been born in Greece, traveled to Rome, slept for a while during the Dark Ages, reawakened in France, etc., etc. This story is entertaining but it traces the development (if we can call it that) of one thin line of civilization for hundreds of years while ignoring the other 99.99 percent of what was going on in the rest of the world. Reducing the history of our culture to such simple terms gives rise to foolish notions, such as the belief that Beethoven, Chopin, and Brahms were the only composers who lived during the nineteenth century. The macrocosmic approach to comparative education may also result

in foolish notions, such as the belief that there was never any opposition to the national plans for education which Kandel describes.

To his credit, Kandel did do on-the-spot observations of educational systems in five of the six countries which he discussed in the 1933 book. He believed in verifying the reports which he read in the literature. But he dismissed the views of dissenting minorities within the national systems as if they were mere abberations. He said:

> Nationalism, then, implies a common language, common customs, and a common culture. A nation is a nationality which has acquired self-government--it is nationality plus the State, as nationality possessing its own political institutions governed by its own consent and coextensive with its own national boundaries. To object that this definition does not take into account minority groups which have a sense of likemindedness is only to say that no definition can be comprehensive. (Kandel, 1933, p.8. Emphasis added.)

He apparently believed very strongly in the melting pot theory, that minority groups should be assimilated into the dominant common culture. However, there is evidence that he relaxed his position on this matter in later years. He recognized in 1956 that

> more attention is being devoted to the adaptation of education to regional cultural differences, including dialects, in the same country. The movement to recognize the languages and cultures of minorities, whether inspired by the example of the U.S.S.R. or by the recognition of a sound educational principle, is widespread. (Kandel, 1956, p.4)

Kandel emphasized that "the student of comparative education, however, needs more than information about an educational system. If the discipline is worth pursuing, it is essential that the student search for information into the educational system or systems that he is studying." (Kandel, 1959, p.271) For him, the way to see into an educational system was to observe the expression of

national character which the schools of each nation exemplify. National character is identified as the reality which animates the schools. It plays a role analogous to the ding-an-sich in the philosophy of Kant or the Will in the philosophy of Schopenhauer: it is not observable per se, but it makes itself manifest.

Some of Kandel's opinions on national character are amusing because they remind one of the folk-wisdom of tourists on a whirlwind tour of foreign countries:

> if the Englishman is a man of action whose progress is marked by empiricism rather than by theory, the Frenchman is a man of ideas who enjoys to think for the sheer pleasure of thinking and generally without much concern for the outcome of thinking in action. (Kandel, 1933, p.29)

Also Kandel's pronouncements on national systems of education may contradict the facts which he observes. In his 1955 book, he states that "it is obvious that a national system cannot be established by borrowing a piece from one country, another from another, and so on." (p.10) Yet, as he goes on to point out the system of the United States has been constructed just as he said it could not be done "the elementary school strongly influenced in its origin by the German system, the secondary school a reproduction of the English Latin grammar school, the college originally a transplantation of an English college, and the university idea imported from Germany." (p.10) Further on he insists that a "German system of education as such will have to grow out of German soil from the seeds of German cultural tradition." (p.11) And yet he says on the same page that this "...does not mean, however, that a nation cannot incorporate into its own sound ideas found in the educational systems of other countries." (p.11) Apparently the Germans cannot borrow educational systems from other countries, but the Americans can borrow from both the Germans and the English. Of course this is in principle impossible to do, but it can be done anyway, if the educational principles are sound. Are the Montessori schools and the Suzuki music schools also examples of educational systems

which American have borrowed from other countries? Perhaps we do not have a national system of education of our own, then.

In the matter of meliorism, Kandel's practice deviated from his theory. He stated that "one thing comparative education does not and ought not to try to do and that is to show how much better one system of education is than another. Every nation or national group has the education that it wants." (Kandel, 1956, p.7) Yet he does favor measuring the success of an educational system in relation to its contribution to the national standard of living or in relation to the degree to which it contributes to the realization of human potential. However, as we have seen, he also favored national systems of education, common national cultures, and, as a Jew, he vigorously opposed Fascism and Communism in his writings on comparative education.

III

Our objective is to reform these three aspects of Kandel's methodology. This can be accomplished by creating a balance between macro- and micro-historical analysis, by taking into account in these analyses the contributions of dissenting minorities in the formulation of educational policy, by allowing that there may be a need for a plurality of educational systems and policies which serve the needs of minority groups, rather than a single unified national system, and by making comparative education studies more scientific and neutral in matters of value judgments.

Anderson has shown that typologies of one sort or another are necessary for the discussion of problems in comparative education.

> To escape from the flood of facts onto the solid ground of general principles has always challenged the aspiring social sciences. The controversy between upholders of the generalizing and the individualizing approaches has never ceased, though one suspects that differences contribute to the dispute. In the absence of experimental controls, no satisfactory rationale for comparative research in the social disciplines has been developed. Comparison between complex societies is, so to speak, logically impossible yet scientifically imperative. We never succeed in removing the confounding elements from our data; yet if we do not generalize, our discussions of school systems remain circumstantial. (Anderson, 1959, p.20)

These suggestions have been offered, then, in the hope that the historical method as applied to comparative education will be a better tool for helping educators to see education in other countries the way it really was--and the way it really is.

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